

Letters of Fire over Edmonton

Introduction

This research report provides a resource suitable for the development of background information on eight previously selected signs, and for drafting interpretive text for a proposed outdoor neon museum. Historical photographic material is provided, when available, to aid in the authentic restoration of the artifacts. Text for eight plaques associated with the artifacts is also provided.

The report includes a brief history of the impact and significance of electrical lighting, electrical signage and neon signage in Edmonton. Background is provided on the eight selected signs, placing them within their cultural, commercial and general historical context.

Effective urban illumination really dates from the use of natural gas in the early 19th century. Another leap forward occurred in 1879 when Thomas Edison and Joseph Wilson Swan patented the carbon-thread incandescent lamp. The next year Edison invented a 16-watt bulb that would last for over 60 days. The electrical age had begun.

Neon was not discovered until 1898, when William Ramsey and M.W. Travers made the discovery in London. The name coined for the discovery means “new gas.” Soon efforts were being made to distill neon gas from liquefied air, in which it constitutes one part per 65,000.

Georges Claude was the first to apply an electrical discharge to a sealed tube of neon gas in about 1902. His neon lamp led to further experimentation. Claude is credited with the first development of a neon sign. The first public exposure to one of his neon lamps occurred at the Paris Expo on 11 December 1910. The first commercial sign was sold by one of Claude’s

associates. Jaques Fonseque, to a Paris barber in 1912. Claude then patented the neon lighting tube on 19 January 1915 (US Patent 1,125,476). Claude introduced neon signs to the United States through his company Claude Neon in 1923, when he sold two to a Packard dealership in Los Angeles.

Red is the colour that neon gas produces, glowing even at atmospheric pressure. The many other colours are produced by argon, mercury or phosphor. The term “neon tubes” is used for all these, however.

Neon in Edmonton

During the 1980s the *Edmonton Journal* noted a resurgence in the popularity of neon signs. Frank Denskie Sr., owner of XL Neon Signs, was quoted as saying that “neon never went out, you just didn’t see it because it was inside [of shaped plastic letters and designs].” [*Edmonton Journal* 6 November 1988]

But the old neon signs, once so common in Edmonton, continued to disappear from older businesses around the city. In 1996 Builders’ Supplies closed its premises across 101 Street from Victoria Composite High School. Bill James left Muttart Lumber to establish the business in 1946. The neon sign, in which “Sam Says Shop at Builders’ Supplies Ltd.”, was apparently donated to Fort Edmonton Park. Airlite Neon Sign Manufacturing Ltd. filed for bankruptcy in January 1996, listing just under \$2.8 million in debt and \$390,000 in assets, leaving its fifteen workers without any severance pay. As the older neon signs continued to disappear, Edmontonians began to value the survivors more. [Ric Dolphin, “Landmark sign disappearing, Builders’ Supply fades away,” *Edmonton Journal* 10 June 1996; Jeff Welke, “Airlite Neon out of gas,” *Edmonton Journal*, 15 February 1996]

Advertising signs as well as signs identifying places of business appeared in Edmonton Settlement from the time that the first businesses began to appear outside Fort Edmonton during the 1870s and 1880s. When the first electrical plant began operation in Ross Flats on 22 December 1891, the first illuminated signs became a possibility, and gradually began to appear on business premises around the town of Edmonton. As the town centre grew and large brick businesses replaced the first frame buildings, these surfaces became prominent and convenient locations for huge signs advertising everything from Coca-Cola to theatres like the Pantages.

Edmonton fell in love with brightly lit streets some time before neon came to the city. After the end of the First World War, with a return to normal life, this ideal became more pressing in many minds. "Let us make Jasper Avenue a blaze of lights," Alderman Hepburn proclaimed during a meeting of City Council Safety and Health committee in October of that year, during a debate on the revision of electrical lighting bylaws. He noted that cities on the west coast were allowed more latitude for lighting businesses, greatly improving the appearance of the streets. Jasper Avenue, City Council felt, was a potential Great White Way, and allowed bigger electric signs. [*Edmonton Journal* 25 October 1919]

On 18 December 1928 the first neon sign appeared in Edmonton on Darling's Drug Store, at the corner of Jasper Avenue and Second Street. The Brilliant Tube Sign Co. (Canada) Ltd., with its head office and plant in Victoria, British Columbia, installed this sign. This company also had offices in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Regina and Calgary. "We construct any kind of Neon Luminous Gas Signs known to the art," the company letterhead announced.

F.G. Smith, with Brilliant Tube, wrote to the City Commissioners the following day that it “would have been a better looking sign if we had not been compelled to adhere to the restriction imposed by your By-Law that signs may not extend more than seven feet from the property line.” Anticipating a City Council meeting on 20 May, Smith requested that Building Inspector John Martland be given authority to allow installation of signs up to at least ten feet from property lines. “Your streets are wide and your sidewalks the widest in Canada; yet your limitation to seven feet compels your merchants to have signs that are dumpy looking and unattractive,” Smith observed. “Neon signs brighten up the streets of any city and the artistry and effectiveness of all signs depend upon the permitted spacing between letters.” Such constrictions meant that, “we have refused to accept a number of orders for Neon signs for Edmonton because, under existing conditions, we do not feel that we can do justice to our product, credit to your streets or give full value to our purchasers.” [F.G. Smith to City Commissioners, City of Edmonton, 19 December 1929, City of Edmonton Archives]

Hook Signs was another early proponent of neon signs in Edmonton. The company was established in the city in 1908, and incorporated as Hook Signs Ltd. in February 1913. During the building boom before the First World War, Hook Signs produced a great deal of store identification signage, display advertising, vehicle signage and gold leaf signs. A Claude Neon Sign also was placed shown in a window display as part of the effort by Hook Signs to introduce Edmontonians to this “Wonder Invention of the Age” in December 1928. In January 1929 the company contacted the City Commissioners regarding a neon beacon for the city airport at Blatchford Field. However, nothing came of this, although the Calgary airport did obtain such a sign. Billboards eventually became Hook’s

main stock in trade across the province. [Hook Signs Neon Sales Department to The City Commissioners, 9 January 1929, City of Edmonton Archives, RG11 C8 f2(a); Pattison Signs website]

Some early Hook commissions in Edmonton:

Hook's Signs EA-275-233 Neon dealership located at 109 Street and 100 Avenue looking north c.1955.

Hook's Signs EA-275-132 Highland Meat and Grocers located at 118 Avenue and 58 Street looking west c.1958.

Hook's Signs EA-275-95 Molson's Brewery c.1955.

Hook's Signs EA-275-41 Tip Top Tailors rotating sign 1960s.

On the same day that Smith sent his letter, Thomas Law, Secretary of the Edmonton Branch, Associated Sign Crafts of North America, endorsed a second letter from Maurice Brown, representing Hook Signs. This letter, also to the office of the City Commissioners, indicated that Hook Signs was "going to attempt during 1929 to brighten up the streets of this city by means of quite a number of Neon Sign installations and other types of electrical displays." Concluding that Edmonton "has been very much behind other cities in illuminated advertising," this letter noted that "we believe much can be done to give life to our business streets and also increase the use of electricity for such purposes, provided sufficient scope is given those investing their money in such displays so that they may be encouraged to erect something really worth while along these lines."

The by-law covering this matter in Edmonton, allows for the projection of an electrical sign for 7'6" from the building line. This is a very fair allowance for a perpendicular display but it

hampers considerably the layout of copy and decorated effects on the horizontal sign.

We suggest, in the case of a horizontal display that this limit be changed to accommodate a sign 10' long, the inside of sign not to suspend more than 1' from building, making a total of 11' over all, but in no instance it be allowed to come more than 12" from the curb, where narrow sidewalks are used.

This is the definition of the by-law in Vancouver, and their streets and sidewalks are about the same width as ours. Similar by-laws exist in Victoria and Calgary, and it is our hope that you will see fit to allow for such limitations in Edmonton.

The writer has just returned from Vancouver, where there are now almost two hundred Neon signs in service, and we assure you that it is an entirely different looking city than two years ago. These displays have brightened things up tremendously and anyone you speak to out there appreciates the difference these signs are making in the general look of the business district.

[Maurice L. Brown, Secretary-Treasurer, Hook Signs Limited, to City Commissioners, City of Edmonton, 19 December 1928, City of Edmonton Archives]

Section 30, Bylaw 27 appears to have been a response to this lobbying. The Commissioners' report to City Council reported that, "a new type of illuminated sign known as the Neon Sign is making rapid headway in various cities and it is especially in connection with the use of these signs that the present proposal is submitted." The new larger signs were allowed after this point, although they were not welcomed with open arms by John Martland. "Reviewing the matter of signs purely from [an] esthetic point of view I must confess that personally I am not very much in favor of them," Martland wrote to Commissioner D. Mitchell. "Looking at it from a commercial

point of view it would appear that the use of signs and particularly illuminated and the more recent Neon Signs have come to stay and are looked upon with favor by the general public," he added with a note of resignation. [John Martland, City Architect and Building Inspector, to City Commissioner D. Mitchell, 20 December 1928]

The apparent reluctance of John Martland to allow large signs was overcome by a concerted campaign by the sign companies, and the growing popularity of the neon sign among the public. Edmonton also did not want to be "left behind" by other more adventurous and innovative cities. In fact, a neon sign for city hall appears to have been under serious consideration in October 1929, although this never came about. The fight to control the proliferation of signs would recur in 1954 through the efforts of Noel Dant and R.F. Duke. [*Edmonton Bulletin*, 19 October 1929]

A large neon sign in front of the *Edmonton Bulletin* office was first unveiled "in all its brilliancy" on the evening of [Wednesday before 25 May 1929]. The *Bulletin* declared it to be "one of the outstanding show things of this city," and published an article in response to the many inquiries about the sign, titled "Here is how neon signs are worked." The sign, installed by Hook Signs, Ltd., was advertised as being "a genuine Claude Neon installation," as Hook implored Edmonton businesses to "Let us design one for you." Many Edmonton companies soon responded to such requests, and neon became a common sight during 1929. [*Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 May 1929]

By 1929 and 1930 companies like Douglas Hammill Limited (10236-96 Street) were manufacturing neon signs in Edmonton. When the new Penn Motor Sales Ltd. garage opened in May 1929 Douglas-Hammill Limited provided its

neon signs, manufactured in the city. This company also provided its neon "Letters of Fire" signs for the Motordrome when it opened in July 1929, as well as the Ritz Café and Crescent Furniture Store in June. Canadian Neon Light, Ltd., neon sign distributors for Alberta and Saskatchewan, also provided such signs in Edmonton through Electrical Engineers Ltd. (10165-101 Street). A newspaper advertisement in January 1929 claimed that its neon signs used only ten per cent of the energy required by signs using electrical light bulbs, while its Pyrex glass bulbs were "practically indestructible," and "could be seen farther than any other type of sign." This company sold and lease neon signs. Henderson Signs Limited (10235-102 Street) also sold neon signs "made by Edmonton men in Edmonton's oldest established sign shop." Neon Products of Western Canada, Limited announced plans to open an Edmonton neon products factory early in 1930. [*Edmonton Bulletin*, 25 May 1929; 8 June 1929; 13 July 1929; 5 January 1929; 17 August 1929; *Edmonton Journal*, 3 August 1929; 21 December 1929]

Another landmark neon sign lit up the busy intersection in front of the Selkirk Hotel just before Christmas 1929. The Burns Shamrock Clock was designed and constructed by Hook Signs, Ltd., by then the northern Alberta distributors for Neon Products of Western Canada, Limited. A large clock, ten feet in diameter and hands five feet long, told the time to passersby, while reminding them that it was "time for Burns' Shamrock Pure Meats." The clock was put into operation at 8:00 pm "sharp" on Saturday, 21 December 1929, at the winter solstice. The Burns company selected Edmonton "in which to erect this beautiful addition to the ever increasing number of bright spots throughout the business district as the result of the installation of many wonderful Neon displays." [*Edmonton Journal*, 21 December 1929]

As the 1930s began, despite the bleak economy, neon signs were becoming fashionable and more common among Edmonton businesses.

CAPTION: Thompson and Kynes ladies wear store in Edmonton was among the first to use neon advertising in 1930. Glenbow ND-3-5110.

CAPTION: Glyde and McLellan Ltd., an Edmonton auto dealership, was early off the mark in neon advertising during 1930 as well. The Willys Six never looked better. Glenbow ND-3-5108.

CAPTION: The Shasta Café in Edmonton in 1931.

CAPTION: The Alberta Hotel sported this neon sign in 1931. Glenbow ND-3-5888.

CAPTION: The Capitol Beauty Parlor and Barber Shop, 10132 Jasper Avenue, was competing with improved street illumination for public attention when this photograph was taken in 1931. Glenbow ND-3-5887b.

CAPTION: The Gainers' "Superior" billboard sized sign, one of the most famous neon landmarks in Edmonton for years because of its size and its location at the bend in Jasper Avenue that rendered it visible for many blocks, as it was seen in 1931. Glenbow ND-3-5899.

CAPTION: Northern Hardware Company Limited, Edmonton, 1932. Glenbow ND-3-6245.

CAPTION: By 1936, looking east from 101 Street along Jasper Avenue, large neon signs were to be seen in their full dazzling array. CEA EA-160-711.

Neon also was spreading throughout Alberta at about this time.

CAPTION: This distinctive neon lit pillar advertised the United Farmers of Alberta store and Ford sales and service in Lacombe. Glenbow ND-2-388.

CAPTION: Smithbuilt Hats found a ready market for its product in Calgary in about 1940.

CAPTION: By the 1950s companies like Neon Products of Western Canada were doing a booming business. Its office at 314 – 4th Street SW in Calgary is shown in this photograph.

CAPTION: When Bennett's Restaurant opened in Calgary in April 1957, it exemplified the most fashionably modern neon lighting. Glenbow NA-5600-6808a.

Watson Neon Sign and Service Co., 9659 – 103 Avenue, Edmonton, summed up the general idea in its advertising in 1939. "Neon signs compel attention – increase business," it proclaimed. "Easily pay for themselves by profits from increased business." [*What Alberta Makes, Makes Alberta: Directory of Made-in-Alberta Goods and Alberta Manufacturers*, p.51, 1939]

Companies like Blanchett Neon found an eager market for neon signs in the postwar years. This company was established in Edmonton as Blanchett Decorators by George Richard Blanchett in 1912. His business, which he began at 10312-115 Street shortly after immigrating from England, presented painting and paperhanging services. In 1946 his sons George Jr., who had gained his experience in Vancouver with Neon Products of Western Canada, and Edward, who had just completed his wartime service with the Royal Canadian Air Force, established the local neon business after purchasing a used neon tube-bending and pumping apparatus in Calgary. This business formed the basis of Blanchett Decorators, Neon and Sign Division. The two operations were incorporated as

separate businesses in 1947, with ownership of the neon business becoming more under the direction of Bud Squair as time passed. Blanchett Neon produced some of the classic signs that still illustrate the spirit of Edmonton in the 1950s – the Shasta Café, the Seven Seas Restaurant, Waterloo Mercury, and many more.

By 1954 Noel Dant, Town Planner, and R.F. Duke, City Architect and Inspector of Buildings, were concerned about the proliferation of signs in postwar Edmonton. “It is becoming increasingly apparent that some united thought should be given to rewriting the existing Sign Bylaw and all its amendments,” they wrote to the Mayor, City Council, and City Commissioners on 6 May. “This is not news, but lack of action in months gone by in rewriting this bylaw has been due chiefly to lack of any terms of reference from City council on a subject of such vast and varied scope on which we all have our own very different opinions.” The existing Sign Bylaw dated from 1917, and was considered “quite outmoded and useless (for instance, it has no provision whatsoever regarding vacuum-tube lighting), and has been amended so often it is almost impossible of clear interpretation....” Dant and Duke estimated that during the preceding two decades “many more signs have been erected without permits than with permits....” They estimated that in 1953 328 signs had been issued permits, “and we are quite sure that at least 2,000 new signs were erected.” Dant and Duke acknowledged the “possible quite radical differences of opinion regarding the ‘taste’ characteristics of signs and billboards” as one of the principal reasons for the need of terms of reference to guide the needed new bylaw. For Dant and Duke, taste was one of the main difficulties.

Signs, billboards, etc., whether for advertising purposes or for directory and information purposes are a necessity of business and of human activity within cities. Their primary function is

to serve as a directory and a guide to the public. They must appear clearly to the eye, and do so in a pleasing manner. They have great possibilities of beauty in themselves. But who, glancing at the existing medley of signs can deny their general effect of confusion and ugliness? Neither can it be suggested that they act effectively as a directory to the public.

[Noel Dant and R.F. Duke, The Functions of Signs, Billboard, etc., Their Design and Their Locational Peculiarities," Appendix to Memorandum: Re: The Control of Signs and Outdoor Advertising Media, 6 May 1954]

For Duke and Dant there were five main problems: the excessive urge of individuals to call attention to their premises; public indifference; pressure by sign makers to sell their products; indiscriminate use of standardized signs; and a lack of skill in the matter of design. Duke and Dant saw the large department stores, banks and trust companies as meeting the taste test. "On the other hand, small businesses with insignificant premises are strongly tempted to make a strenuous appeal for public notice by exhibiting signs upon their buildings," they conclude. "In doing this, such businesses, each endeavouring to out-do its neighbour, start a competition in loud advertising, inevitably leading to a discordant general display in which any individual advantage is lost in the general confusion and the neighbourhood is lowered in general estimation."

Likewise, the public bore some blame for the lamentable situation. "Bright colours and loud noises are the natural delight of small children. General public taste has a difficulty in rising beyond these primitive instincts or to be aroused to a positive demand for orderliness and beauty. Frequently, atrocious signs are hailed with delight on account of their sheer badness and boldness, such as smart or bold criminals

enlist a certain amount of public sympathy and admiration.” Lack of skill was another bugbear. “Those that furnish illuminated signs have little regard for those whose business is painting and still less for the fundamental art of architecture.” Dant and Duke called for a tasteful move to use standardized gold-coloured or white signs in store windows, and turn the civic back on unsightly signs. “There is, however, a very human desire for excitement and liveliness that hanker after a more general display than allowed under the above proposal of restraint,” they concluded. “How far may we go yet not fall into total discord and confusion? To lessen restraints may give opportunity for new experiments in beautiful effects or on the other hand it may open the flood gates of disorder and ugliness.”

Given these attitudes, illuminated lighting and especially neon lighting, were not smiled upon by the official voice of civic taste in such matters. Reflecting on “unsuitable forms” of signage, Dant and Duke make the following comments:

Advertising signs tend increasingly to take the form of projecting signs, overhanging the sidewalk. These offer certain picturesque possibilities, especially effective as night illumination but also unfortunately produce some of the worst effects of discord. In fact they have come to be the chief cause of disorder in the appearance of our streets. Standing at the corner of Jasper Avenue at any street intersection can make this point plain. In regard to efficient as a public guidance it may be admitted that given fair isolation they may be easily read from either the near or the farther sidewalk and from a considerable distance beyond. But when multiplied and placed one near the other they greatly [conflict] with one another and

probably completely fall short of the objective tht they have been aimed at, in other words to be seen from a large (sic) distance away. This multiplicity arises from their use by stores with small frontages and it is further complicated by their use to serve upper storeys.”

“Illuminated over-hanging signs have almost invariably a clumsy appearance by daylight on account of the need for internal wiring and other apparatus,” the report continues. “The attempts often made to give them fanciful forms, emphasizes this essential clumsiness; simple forms are best.”

When a premises of several storey's in height is all in one ownership, verticle (sic) signs, either flat or projecting may be made to increase the variety of night effects. This may be appropriate for theatre[s] and restaurants. Where illuminated signs are thus used they are open to the general objection of illuminated signs and they have a heavy, clumsy effect by daylight, and they should never be applied to buildings that are otherwise well designed, for they are destructive of architectural effect. (This may be seen at the Corona Hotel, a well-designed building with a verticle (sic) illuminated sign, which, although itself well-designed destroys the beauty of the building.)

Finally, as an example of unharmonious signage, Duke and Dant cited an example from Edmonton. “Neighbourly consideration is obviously the fundamental condition of harmony,” they wrote. “This applies to the appearance of our buildings. For example take the case of the South Side Baptist Church with its red neon sign “Jesus Saves” in the midst of housing.”

Historical Overview of Sign Related Sites

The following provides brief historical overviews of the sites associated with the signs selected for display, with any detail

regarding the signs themselves that was found during research.

1. Pantages Theatre

The Pantages Theatre operated as a vaudeville theatre at 10209 Jasper Avenue from 1913 until 1921.

George Brown rented the southwest corner of Jasper Avenue and Second Street for one thousand dollars a month in 1912. He took a trip that year to interest investors in building on the lots so that he could benefit from the deal, although he could not afford to purchase that property at the height of the prewar speculation. Brown interested a fellow Greek, Alexander Pantages, in building on the rear two thirds of his rented property, and then convinced City Council to loan him \$50 thousand, and began construction on the front third of the property. He opened the Shasta Grill in the basement of the two-storey building, but this was replaced by the famous American Dairy Lunch. [Tony Cashman, *The Edmonton Story*, pp. 244-247]

A “skyscraper block” of ten stories was first announced for the corner of Jasper Avenue and Second Street in the *Edmonton Bulletin* on 15 March 1912. In addition to office space, the design by architect E.C. Hopkins was to accommodate a grand new theatre. Plans changed in June, when it was announced in Seattle that B. Marcus Pritica, the architect who designed all the Pantages theatres, was now planning the theatre complex for Alexander Pantages, the theatrical impresario and entrepreneur. Theatres also were planned for Canada in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Vancouver. While the Vancouver building would be ten stories high, the Edmonton theatre would only stand five stories high, “more money will be expended in Edmonton to provide for one of the handsomest theatres and office buildings in Western Canada.” Mayor

William Short opened the Pantages Theatre on 12 May 1913 to a packed house of 1600 people. J.J. Cluxton was the first resident manager for the Pantages. Lieutenant Governor Bulyea, Mayor Short and a plethora of dignitaries were among the opening night audience. The *Edmonton Bulletin* heralded the Pantages as the “most northerly high class vaudeville play house in North America.” [*Edmonton Bulletin* 15 March 1912; 29 June 1912; 18 May 1913; 9 May 1914]

The Pantages Theatre Orchestra was organized for the opening of the theatre under conductor Albert Weaver-Winston, who had spent four years on the Pantages circuit before taking up the position in Edmonton. By 1919 the Pantages circuit had fifty such orchestras. In 1919 the Edmonton Pantages Orchestra boasted a repertoire of 3000 musical pieces. [*Edmonton Bulletin* 6 December 1919]

In July 1921 George and Gust Brown, Edmonton partners with Alexander and Louis Pantages in the Pantages Edmonton Theatre Company Limited , heard news from Seattle that the Pantages company stated that the company was insolvent and that they were planning to place the Edmonton Pantages in receivership. The Browns, fifty per cent partners, launched legal action to restrain the Pantages brothers from taking this action. Apparently successful, the Browns announced that the theatre would reopen on 3 September 1921 as “a motion picture house.” This spelled the end of the traveling vaudevillians, but the new Metropolitan Theatre declared that it would retain “a real concert orchestra” under Edgar Williams. [*Edmonton Bulletin*, 26 July 1921; 2 September 1921]

Around 1931 Alex Entwistle purchased the theatre, upgraded the sound system for the “talkies,” and added what he now called the Strand Theatre to his network of movie houses.

Some live events remained, as the Edmonton Little Theatre and local opera productions used the stage on occasion. Premier William Aberhart used the Strand for his Edmonton Prophetic Bible Institute broadcasts, much as Premier E.C. Manning would use the Paramount Theatre in later years.

In 1945 the old Brown frontage on Jasper Avenue was sold to the Entwistle and Famous Players interests, and in 1953 the Strand was renovated, or in fact gutted of its interior features. In 1956 Famous Players purchased the Strand. First Northern Building Corporation purchased the Strand in 1959. It was declared a Provincial Historic Resource in 1976 and dismantled in 1979. Several items were retained for the City Artifact Centre.

The details of the vertical sign selected for restoration can be seen in a series of excellent photographs retained in archival collections.

A McDermid Studio photograph taken 24 July 1919 shows the north façade, or main entrance on Jasper Avenue, including the upright, projecting sign in question, rising above the awning-type marquee over the front entry (CEA EA-118-82). Another photograph taken in 1919 during the return of the 49th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, shows the top of the marquee crowded with people huddling around the vertical sign as the 49ers march past below them (CEA EA-327-32). Another McDermid photograph shows how the entire sign assembly was mounted and attached to the Pantages façade on 3 September 1919 (CEA EA-160-295; see also Glenbow NC-6-4669). Two other images from about this time show the Pantages Block with its signs clearly visible. The American Dairy Lunch now shows clearly just east of the Pantages (Glenbow Archives NC-6-4550 and NC-6-4670).

A series of three photographs taken in 1921 show the front entrance of the Pantages Theatre clearly, with details of the marquee surmounted by its decorative “coat of arms” (Glenbow Archives NC-6-6027, NC-6-6029b, and NC-6-7090). These may be the most detailed view of the signs.

Byron-May also took another night photograph of the Pantages Theatre looking west on Jasper Avenue from 102 Street, and showing how the sign appeared when illuminated (CEA EB23-5; note also the illuminated Shasta Grill sign). The theatre itself is seen from the southwest on 10 March 1923, in a McDermid Studio shot taken during an event attracting long lineups stretching around the block. The painted sign on the west wall (“Pantages Vaudeville”) can be seen in this photograph, taken from above.

A charming 1925 photograph shows the Butterfly Kiddies in front of the theatre in their car with a banner reading “The Butterfly Kiddies Pantages this Week Seeing Edmonton in a McLaughlin through courtesy of Edmonton Journal” (Glenbow Archives ND-3-2847).

The sign was removed from the theatre in 1930 when the Pantages company sold the property. It then formed the inside wall of a 97 Street salvage yard for several years. In 1960 Charles Wilson, who was doorman on opening night in 1913, when the bill included Belle Baker, “the Tetrizzini of Ragtime,” was photographed by sections of the sign, which appears to have been disassembled as part of its history as a wall.
[*Edmonton Journal* 26 October 1960]

The vertical sign once had a decorative illuminated “cascade” of lights over it, enhancing its first impression. This would add greatly to the effect of the sign if it could be recreated as part of the restoration of the remaining part of the sign that remains intact.

2. The Princess Theatre

Prominent Strathcona businessman J.W. McKernan built the Princess Theatre on Whyte Avenue during 1914 and 1915. It was designed by the architectural firm of Wilson and Herrald, and constructed by contractors Brown and Hargraves.

The marble front now being erected at the new Princess theatre of Whyte avenue will add much to the business like appearance of the 'White Way.' The Princess will be a welcome addition to the South Side for its seating capacity on floor and gallery will be about 660. The ceiling is 28 feet high and the building is equipped with the same modern system of ventilation as is the Strathcona hospital and the King Edward school. The stage will be 10 feet by 18 feet with a picture screen 11 feet by 14 feet. Except for the name set in tiles and the copper cornice the whole front of the here storey building will be of marble. It will be the only marble front building west of Winnipeg.

The main program of entertainment will be high class moving pictures varied occasionally with high class vaudeville or musical concerts. Strange to say the Princess theatre is being built and will be operated by the McKernans who already operate the only two picture houses on the South Side. They are adding many modern features and will aim to make the Princess a high class picture theatre as good if not better than any in the city with a view of retaining on the South Side the theatre patronage of South Siders. [Edmonton Bulletin 30 September 1914]

The Princess was expected to open by the end of 1914, but the outbreak of the First World War, and the resulting shortages of labour and materials, postponed the opening until early in 1915, despite the declaration of the date stone above its entrance that the opening occurred in 1914.

By March the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that gold leaf was “being used plentifully on the friezes and similar decorations.” [Edmonton Bulletin 8 March 1915]

Mortimer Burgess, a Strathcona photographer, took a photograph of the façade of the new Princess Theatre shortly after its opening in 1915. (This could have been taken during the following summer.) At this time the only signage consisted of the incised words “Princess Theatre” across the main entrance, and bracketed by two projecting electric lights. [City of Edmonton Archives, EA-519-1]

Robert Ritchie sold the property on which the Princess Theatre would be built on 5 March 1913. John W. McKernan, the new property owner, hired architects Wilson and Herrald to design, and contractors Brown and Hargreaves to construct a prestigious photoplay house on Whyte Avenue in 1914, just prior to the outbreak of the First World War. It would cost an impressive \$75,000 by the time it opened on 8 March 1915, with marble and tile façade, lobby and vestibule and stained glass in the entrance doors. Hungarian artist Mily Rezac painted the “classical” friezes above the proscenium stage. [Edmonton Bulletin, 8 March 1915] In February 1915 the *Edmonton Bulletin*, reported that the Princess Theatre block was nearing completion, “and notwithstanding the unfavorable conditions brought on by the war, work has been continued on the building almost without cessation since [construction began].” [Edmonton Bulletin, 13 February 1915] “This new playhouse on Whyte Avenue stands as a splendid tribute to the greatness of an invention dedicated solely to the purpose of peace,” the *Edmonton Journal* editorialized just before the Princess opened [Edmonton Journal, 6 March 1915] The theatre struggled to make a profit during the war, and just when conditions may have been about to recover, the Spanish influenza pandemic hit Edmonton, and John McKernan, the

theatre manager, became a victim on 18 February 1919, at the age of 39 years. His estate and descendants would keep a close connection with the property until it was sold to Eugene Pechet and S. Kaplan on 23 May 1957.

The Princess Theatre entered a new phase of its history when it was purchased by the Entwisle brothers. Alexander Entwisle, theatre manager, Clarence Entwisle, telegrapher, and Arnold Entwisle, accountant, all of Edmonton, established Princess Theatre Limited in Edmonton on 4 April 1927, taking over the McKernan theatre interests in Strathcona. Their objects were: to carry on the business of theatre proprietors and managers; to provide entertainments of all kinds, and in particular by photoplays, moving pictures, cineographs, cinematographic productions, operas, vaudevilles, concerts, and musical and dramatic performances; to carry on the business of restaurant keepers, purveyors, tobacconists, merchants, theatrical agents, box office keepers, advertisers, and publicity agents; to enter into agreements for any rights of or for the production of any such entertainments, and to enter into engagements of all kinds with artists, cinematographers, and other persons; and to acquire and take over as a going concern the business of the proprietor of the theatre at Edmonton known as the "Princess" theatre, and all or any assets of such proprietor. The Entwisles were capitalized at \$10,000 divided into ten thousand shares of \$1.00 each, and were registered on 5 April 1927. [Alberta Corporate Registries, Entwisle Theatres Limited, Department of the Provincial Secretary Companies Branch, file no. 7300; Memorandum of Association of Princess Theatre Limited, 4 April 1927]

In 1928 the company name was changed from Princess Theatre Limited to Entwisle Theatres, Limited [registered 16 January 1928]; the company address became 10337 Whyte

Avenue, "Edmonton South," as of 30 April 1928. Total shares allotted by year-end totalled 7,503. Three shares paid in cash, 7,500 allotted credited as fully paid up front in consideration for sale... of leasehold premises known as the Princess Theatre... purchased by the company... 30 April 1928. [Alberta Corporate Registries, Entwisle Theatres Limited, Department of the Provincial Secretary Companies Branch, file no. 7300, Minutes of meeting of members of the [Princess Theatre Limited] held on 13 January 1928; Letter to the Registrar of Companies, Government Buildings, Edmonton, Alberta; Report of directors of the [Princess Theatre Limited]... 27 December 1928]

At the end of 1928 the following agreement was struck:
"Alexander Entwisle shall sell to Entwisle Theatres Limited... the Princess Theatre erected on Lot Nine, Block Sixty-one, Plan "I", in that part of the City of Edmonton formerly called Strathcona, and that certain lease dated the 1st day of September, 1925, and made by Jessie Frank McKernan and William Short, Executors of J.W. McKernan, deceased... and the machinery and utensils used in connection with the said business, namely - 2 Powers 6-B Projection Machines complete, 1 Gold Fibre Screen, 4 Wall Fans, 1 dozen ordinary chairs (in loges), 1 Grand Piano, 4 Music Stands, Sundry Parts and Accessories for the said Projection Machines... for the sum of \$7,500...." Entwisle Theatres Limited was converted to a private company in January 1930. [*Ibid.*, Agreement made the 27 December 1928 between Alexander Entwisle... and Entwisle Theatres Limited; Letter to the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, 21 January 1930]

Arnold Entwisle was no longer listed as a company director by the end of 1952, although Alexander and Clarence Entwisle remained directors. By December 1953 Clarence Entwisle was

listed as the theatre proprietor and John McCrum as the Trust Company Officer. Alexander Entwisle also ceased to hold office as director in December 1953. [*Ibid.*, Annual Report, 31 December 1952; Forms 9 & 10 Combined, The Companies Act, Notice of Change of Directors, 29 December 1953]

At an extraordinary general meeting of shareholders in September 1957 it was resolved that the capital of the company be increased from \$10,000 divided into 10,000 shares of a...value of \$1.00 each, to \$110,000 by the creation of 100,000 Preference Shares of a par value of \$1.00 each. During November another extraordinary meeting was held with Clarence Entwisle and Laurance Y. Cairns, "being all the shareholders," present. John McCrum is no longer listed. It was reported that 27,483 shares had been redeemed, and capital was to be reduced by cancelling the shares which had been redeemed as follows: Clarence Entwisle - 27,480 shares; Laurance Y. Cairns - 3 shares. Capital was reduced from \$110,000 to \$82,517 by cancelling 27,483 shares. Clarence Entwisle had moved to Galiano, British Columbia by October 1957. By December Clarence Entwisle's address was Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico, Laurance Y. Cairns was no longer listed as director and W. Stanley Ross and James D. Wallbridge were listed as the company barristers. By 1960 shareholders included Clarence Entwisle, Galiano, retired, with 7,502 and W. Stanley Ross, Edmonton, barrister, with 1. Entwisle Theatres Limited was struck off the register in 1961; it was resolved that the company "discontinue all operations forthwith" in July 1961, and "at the expiration of two months from this date, the following company will be struck of the register... Entwisle Theatres Limited [struck off register, 15 September 1961]." [*Ibid.*, Minute of extraordinary general meeting of the shareholders of Entwisle Theatres Limited, 19 September 1957; Minutes of extraordinary general meeting of the

shareholders of Entwisle Theatres Limited, 4 November 1957; The Companies Act, R.S.A. 1942, Return of shares allocated by Entwisle Theatres Limited, 25 October 1957; Annual Report, 31 December 1957]; List of persons holding shares in Entwisle Theatre, 31 December 1960; Minutes of extraordinary meeting of shareholders of Entwisle Theatres Limited, 29 May 1961 Company liable to be struck off the register, 15 July 1961]

When the McKernan family divested its interests in the Princess during the late 1950s, the prevalence and popularity of television was making it more difficult for the movie industry, encouraging experiments such as 3-D and drive-in to lure patrons back into theatre seats. But the Princess remained a second-run theatre, and then shut entirely, serving as the home for several retail outlets. Town Cinema Ltd. bought the theatre from Eugene Pechet and S. Kaplan on 4 May 1971, renovated it and reopened it as the Klondike Cinema. When the Princess Theatre was purchased by Towne Cinemas it was given a “facelift” valued at \$270,000, before reopening as the Klondike Cinema. The *Edmonton Journal* reported in December 1971 that the friezes, lamps and “a tableau in oils of nymphs and ships” were being restored. [*Edmonton Journal* 10 December 1971]

In 1976 the Princess Theatre was designated a historic site. The *Edmonton Journal* reported that the Princess Theatre was opening as the city’s only repertory theatre under the direction of Frank Grisdale on 2 May 1979. [E] 20 April 1979]

In 1995 the Princess Theatre Society applied “to provide for the recreation of the members and to promote and afford opportunity for friendly and social activities [and] to sell, manage, lease, mortgage, dispose of, or otherwise deal with the property of the society. Signees were Patricia McIntosh, Gary Holroyd, Pieter de Vos, Janey Millar and David Balcon. “The

Princess Theatre Society will be financially secure, directed and staffed by a team who are dedicated to promoting its mandate in partnership with arts and business communities," it was stated by the society. "The Princess' mandate is to become the western centre for eclectic film and video, while nurturing the theatre itself as a multi-use, historically-friendly civic landmark, reflective of the character of Old-Strathcona." Society objects were "to be the centre for the viewing and study of film and video in Western Canada; to further the historical preservation and enhancement of the Princess Theatre; and to pursue active partnerships with the community in Old Strathcona and with the residents, businesses and arts groups of Edmonton and Alberta." It was also in the by-laws that: "The minimum of five members of the Board of Directors shall consist of one member appointed by the Old Strathcona Foundation Board, two members elected from the Princess Theatre Society general membership, and two members elected from public advertising and interview process..." [Alberta Corporate Registries, Corporate Access Number 50676206-Princess Theatre Society, Application to form a society, 2 November 1995; Bylaws of the Princess Theatre Society, 28 November 1995; Certificate of Incorporation, 1 December 1995]

While the Princess Theatre had closed in 1958, in the face of competition from television, it was not until 1964 that the large Princess sign was removed.

A photograph showing workmen removing the sign appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* on 10 March 1964. The sign was donated to the Archives and Landmarks Committee, forerunner of the Edmonton Historical Board, after which it was mounted on the west wall of the Historical Exhibits Building, which housed the old City Archives. H.M. Rice, the theatre manager, oversaw a complete renovation in the spring

of 1964. The renovation included new seats, air conditioning and screen.

A photograph of the removal of the sign with a clear image of the sign also appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* on 10 February 1978, as did a photograph of the entrance in 1945, also with the bottom of the sign visible. It was later purchased by the Old Strathcona Foundation, restored, and reopened in 1978.

For many years the Princess sign was attached to the back of the City Archives Building, on its southwest corner. The sign was recorded in this position by photographer Alf H. Want on 7 October 1977 [City of Edmonton Archives, photograph EA-266-102] The Pantages Theatre sign also can be seen in this photograph.

3. Drug Store Signs

The first neon sign in Edmonton was put up on a drug store in 1928. Such businesses have been among the most common sites for neon signs over the years.

The sign selected to illustrate this subject appears to have been discovered in the basement of the Stovel Block, constructed across 97 Street at #427 Namayo Street in 1910. There is a story that the sign appeared originally on the Armstrong Drug Store, although this remains unconfirmed despite a survey of archival photographs.

Armstrong Drug Store originally opened at #433-#439 Namayo Avenue (97 Street) in 1907; the present address is 10331-97 Street. Armstrong Drugs offered its services to the public on this location for the next nine decades. George S. Armstrong, the druggist, lived at #439 Namayo Avenue when first listed in Henderson's Directory for 1907. George Armstrong served as mayor of Edmonton and City Commissioner during 1912-1913, and lived at 433 Namayo at

that time. In 1914 his address changed to 10345-97 Street. In 1920 M.J. Warner was listed as the proprietor of Armstrong Drugs and Stationery. In 1950 this changed to George J. Andrews, who was co-manager with a woman named Stephanie.

A photograph of Namayo Avenue looking north from Boyle Street (103 Avenue) in September 1907 shows Armstrong Drugs with a large painted sign on its south wall. The sign appears to read: G.S. Armstrong Drugs and Stationery. [Ernest Brown photograph, Provincial Archives of Alberta – also see CEA EA-157-410 for a copy of this image.] Armstrong Drugs still had no projecting sign of any kind in 1913 when another photograph was taken. Mac's Bath and Massage did have a projecting sign on the building at the time, however. Armstrong Drugs contented itself with window advertising ("Kodaks Trusses"). [Provincial Archives of Alberta, B 4129]

Another well-known projecting drugstore sign was seen on the Merrick Drug Stores for many years, and is now reproduced on the replica of one Merricks location in Fort Edmonton Park. [See Glenbow Archives ND-3-5848c for a view of this sign in 1931. It reads: "Drugs Sodas-Lunches." This identical sign is shown on two Merrick Drug Stores in Edmonton in 1931. (Also see Glenbow ND-3-5848a).

The sign, a narrow vertical sign spelling out DRUGS from top to bottom, outlined in blue-green, as is the entire sign, has a solid red background for the letters. Holes remain where the neon tubes, now missing, were threaded into the display. A decal indicates that A-1 Neon Signs, of Edmonton, manufactured the sign.

4. W.W. Arcade

The W.W. Arcade building began as the Goodridge Block when it was constructed for Leonard A. Goodridge at 9696 Jasper Avenue during 1911 and 1912. Designed by architect Robert Percy Barnes, the ground floor at first housed a men's wear store, barbershop, wine, liquor and cigar store, and pool hall, while the upper floors housed offices. This was a prominent location at the northeast corner of Jasper Avenue and Namayo Avenue, during its last years as the principal commercial intersection of the city.

In 1932 the main floor was taken over by W.W. Sales Hardware, when Samuel P. Wilson purchased the property. Then during the Second World War its name was changed to W.W. Arcade by the new owners, the Ainsley brothers (Alex, Bob and Dave), and this name lasted from 1942 until March 1991, when the business moved out of the main floor of the building. During June 1959 Otto Sundahl, Builder and Contractor, removed the canopy above the main-floor show windows and replaced it with metal lath and stucco. The Ainsleys carried out major renovations in 1967, rebuilding the east wall, modifying the storefront, and refinishing the roof. In November 1991 the Edmonton Downtown Business Corporation received \$1.2 million from the federal government to restore the Goodridge Block. Total costs would be \$2.3 million when the grand opening took place on 15 April 1993.

Two good images of the building façade remain from an Edmonton Planning Department photograph taken in 1970 (CEA EA-33-123), and a Hollingsworth photograph taken in 1978 (CEA EA-289-130). The building name remains above the cornice on the low parapet ("W.W. Sales Ltd.") in these photographs.

The sign selected for restoration is clearly visible in EA-289-130, taken in 1978, attached to the south wall above the entrance, and below the Bapco Paint sign.

5. Mike's News

Mike's News carried on business as an Edmonton institution from 1912 until 1986. The distinctive sign, with the engrossed reader, only his hat showing above his copy of the *Toronto Star Weekly*, and one crossed foot wagging away, was a landmark on Jasper Avenue from 1934 until it was removed in 1979. (The "newsstand" remained at 10062 Jasper Avenue for most of its life, until it moved to 10119-101 Street in 1979, when the sign was donated to Fort Edmonton Park.)

John "Mike" Michaels also was something of an Edmonton institution. He arrived from New York in 1912, and began selling newspapers using a horse as transportation, and later a four-wheeled vehicle powered by a motorcycle engine. At first he had as associates several friends from New York. Soon he was selling newspapers on the corner of First Street and Jasper Avenue.

Michaels bought out Mickey Ryan and Walter Wolk, obtaining their busy spot to conduct his downtown newspaper vending business. This was a true, classic newsstand (as seen in CEA EA-10-1587). This situation lasted until just before Christmas 1916 when the *Edmonton Journal* reported a change.

Mike has found for himself a comfy location between Jasper and Howard, where the Boston Hat Works used to hold forth, and for the cold months, or perhaps indefinitely, Mike and his clerks will be inside looking out instead of spending all their waking moments on the street corner.... Winter is coming on and Mike's clerks have become more or less aristocratic. If they have to be tradespeople they want to be inside like other merchants.... Mike

will retain the corner of 101st and Jasper but not as such a well stocked news stand in future. In his new store he carries a full line of magazine, newspapers, periodicals and smokes, and will specialize in magazine subscriptions, having opened up this week especially to be certain of the Christmas crowds.

[*Edmonton Journal*, 7 December 1916]

The new premises “a few doors East of the Old Stand at the corner of First and Jasper,” advertised that it was “equipped better than ever to serve the public” at 10062 Jasper Avenue East, where it would remain until 1979.

Michaels started the Newsboys Band in 1914, with the help of Bishop H.A. Gray, who wanted to find something constructive for the boys to do in the evenings. The band eventually became an Edmonton institution, and was internationally recognized. The ticket sales end of Mike’s began in 1918. In 1930 Michaels stated his annual Christmas dinners for homeless veterans at what later became known as the Montgomery Legion.

A photograph shows Michaels and his friend and associate Bob Wright, at Mike’s News Agency, outside the Empire Block, shortly after he arrived. (Wright started Provincial News out of the back of Mike’s as a wholesale service that grew to considerable proportions during the next decades. Wright managed Mike’s after it moved indoors in 1916, and continued to manage the store until 1970, with the help of Michaels’ daughter Audrey, after Mike died in 1962. The wholesale distributor later moved to 108 Avenue and 117 Street, and moved to its new quarters at 14615-124 Street in December 1966. By this time Provincial News Company was distributor of newspapers, books and magazines in northern Alberta, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and part of northern British Columbia.) (*Edmonton Journal* 2 December 1966)

Another image shows the electric sign at Mike's stand in 1923, on which sports events could be followed. (Glenbow ND-3-1887) Two other photographs of particular interest include one by taken by Alfred Blyth on 10 August 1945. This shows the bottom of the sign, with its reflection in the adjacent window. Neon signs above the windows advertise Sweet Caporal cigarettes and magazines. The lettered sign above the entrance awning at the 10062 Jasper Avenue location reads: "mike's magazines smokes newspapers pipes." (Provincial Archives of Alberta Bl 964/1) Mike's was also a post office, where many Edmontonians received their copies of British and other overseas publications, and a busy ticket office. A photograph of a window display taken on 2 May 1947 advertises the coming Ice Capades. (Provincial Archives of Alberta Bl 1307b)

A good series of photographs, taken on 5 December 1966 during the fiftieth anniversary of Mike's, and printed in the *Edmonton Journal*, show the sign in place, and indicate how it was attached to the façade. (Provincial Archives of Alberta J 52/1 and J 52/2) The sign as it appeared on 18 August 1978 is seen in another *Edmonton Journal* image. (Provincial Archives of Alberta J 4205/1)

In 1978 the Michaels family sold Mike's to Arnold Sacher, after which it was moved to the lower floor of the former Johnstone-Walker store on 101 Street north of 101A Avenue. The Johnstone-Walker store had been vacant since it was closed in 1978, and Mike's was moved in 1979, largely due to the proposed Morguard Properties Ltd. and Bank of Nova Scotia plan to redevelop most of the block enclosed by Jasper Avenue, 101A Avenue, 101 Street and 100A Avenue. [John Forsythe, "Neon landmark to leave Jasper," *Edmonton Journal*, 13 September 1979]

6. Georgia Baths

Steam baths once were a common part of Edmonton life, popular in later years with immigrant groups and working men. The story was different in 1913, when the first Turkish bath opened in the city. "A new and elaborate Turkish Bath House has at last been established in the city to fill a long felt want for a city of the size and population of Edmonton," an article in the *Edmonton Journal* observed. "The business itself will be located in the new Gibson block, one of Edmonton's high class structures, situate on Jasper avenue at the point where Rice, Kinistino and Jasper converge...." Edmonton Turkish Baths Limited opened for business on 25 October 1913. At that time such facilities were considered much as health spas are today. Edmonton Turkish Baths boasted 13 large sleeping rooms, two large hot rooms, a steam room, three shower baths, six tub baths, a barbershop, cigar stand, refreshments and shoeshine. "Competent masseurs" (Messrs. Mason and McAlduff) were available, and clients were invited to "enjoy the luxury of a real Turkish Bath, and a sleep in our cosy sleeping rooms." Appointments were available "by day or night." In short, this was "the most up-to-date in Western Canada." [*Edmonton Journal*, 22 October 1913; 8 November 1913]

The Georgia Turkish Baths, a direct successor of the Edmonton Turkish Baths, would be the last such business to close in Edmonton. Mike Bordian built the last location for his steam bath in the dirt basement of the Brighton Block when his lease expired in the nearby Flatiron Building in 1946. His son Ed took over in 1961, and managed the baths until the business was closed by the Edmonton Board of Health on 23 August 1991. It reopened later as Steamers, but was again closed by the Board of Health in November 2005.

Georgia Baths is known as “Edmonton’s oldest public steam bath.” [EJ 9 November 2005] Located in the basement of the Brighton Block at 9668 Jasper Avenue, it was constructed in the earth basement by Mike Bordian in 1946 after his lease in the adjacent Flatiron Building expired. Georgia Baths was operated after 1961 by Ed Bordian, his son. [EJ 24 August 1991] On 23 August 1991 it was closed by the Edmonton Board of Health because of “heavy cockroach infestation,” as well as general physical deterioration, lack of a firewall, and poor lighting. Jerry Zurin and his brother were the owners at this time. [EJ 24 August 1991; EJ 27 August 1991]

The owners by 2005 were Full Steam Ahead Inc., Clifford Richard Kay and Daryl Agestar. It later was named Steamers. Most of Georgia Baths was closed by 2005, under various provisions of the Public Health Act. A newspaper account cited as problems: moisture damage and rot in the walls, the ceiling, and trim as well as mould in the steam room, which lacked adequate ventilation. The license for the hot tub was revoked in November 2005 because of “dirt and slime.” [EJ 9 November 2005]

In 1991 Ed Bordian recalled how the Georgia Baths once served as something of a social club for older men. “They would sit around in the steam room, play cards, spend the whole day here.” Turkish baths, which begins with a steam bath, followed by a soap rub, and ending with a salt rub, were not offered since the 1980s, according to Ed Bordian. At one time sea-salt baths and sulphur baths also were available in a large tub located at the rear of the facility. There also was a women’s section at one time, and women from a neighbouring dry cleaner once came to use this service as part of their weekly routine. “All the girls from the laundry used to come in

Saturday night and steam and shower....” Mike Robinson, the night clerk for many years, estimated in 1991 that three-quarters of the daily customers had been using the baths for years. [E] 18 February 1991]

Jerry Zurin, who owned the Brighton Block for years, recalled in 1991: “When I was a kid a lot of people, influential people, came down here for a steam.” [E] 24 August 1991] Clients changed over the years, and the Georgia Baths later were associated with gay users, making it the focus of some high-profile political attention.

GEORGIA BATHS PHOTOS

A good photograph, showing how the sign was suspended from the façade of the Brighton Block in 1990, can be viewed on flickr under “Georgia Baths.”

An excellent colour photograph of the Georgia Baths sign *in situ* was taken by Bruce Edwards, and appeared in an article in the *Edmonton Journal* 18 February 1991. The sign, featuring a woman wearing a bikini on a beach, with the name “Georgia Baths” illuminated in neon, hung over the entrance to this location at 9668 Jasper Avenue for many years. Another photograph of the sign *in situ* was one, also taken by Bruce Edwards, that appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* on 18 January 1991. It clearly shows the sign and how it was attached to the façade of the Brighton Block. An earlier view of the sign can be seen in City of Edmonton Archives photograph EA-193-53. An early photograph of the Flatiron Building features a large sign that reads: “The Edmonton Turkish Baths Co. Ltd. In The Basement Open All Night. (Provincial Archives of Alberta B4808).

7. Cliff’s Auto Parts and Wreckers

Cliff's Auto Parts and Wreckers operated at 9646 Jasper Avenue from 1959 until 1962, according to the Henderson's City Directories for those years. (This address is listed as vacant in the 1958 Henderson's Directory.) William Choma, of 9917-103 Street, was the proprietor, while Phillip Fath, of 9859-85 Street (in 1959), remained the manager from 1959 to 1962.

In 1962 Cliff's Transmission and Auto Parts moved to 10819B-101 Street. Cliff's Auto Parts also had a yard located in Riverdale by about 1963. On 2 June 1963 a petition from Riverdale residents was sent to the office of the City Commissioners, protesting the "disorderly mess" made by the Airlite Neon Sign Company (9839 Jasper Avenue) and Cliff's Auto Parts at a yard located at 88 Street and 100 Avenue. The petition claimed that these businesses had moved in without City permission... [and] the residents of Riverdale would like to see these companyes (sic) removed as quick as possible."

[City of Edmonton Archives RG11 C19 f90]

The Commissioners reported the petition to Mayor Elmer Roper, who on 10 June directed City Solicitor A.F. Macdonald to "have this situation looked into and report what action you propose taking." Roper clearly was concerned about this "largely signed petition from residents of the Riverdale district." City Legal Department Investigating Officer N.A. Garfuik reported to Mayor Roper on 25 June that the property in question, which he termed a "sign dump and auto wreckers," was owned by J.B. Little, of J.B. Little and Sons, who owned the large brickyard in Riverdale. "He has made application to the Interim Development Appeal Board for a Development Permit for the lots in question," Garfuik wrote. "When the Board passes on his application, the matter will be followed up by our Department." Then on 16 September Garfuik reported:

“...please be advised that the Development Application for a storage lot for Cliff’s Transmission and Airlite Neon Sign Co. was refused by City Council on the recommendation of the Interim Development Appeal Board.” A photograph credited to the Planning Department shows the site sometime in the 1960s. [City of Edmonton Archives RG11 C19 f90; CEA EA-33-220]

Of possible interest for location of neon signs of the period, Garfuik also reported to Mayor Roper as follows:

“With regard to the storage of obsolete neon signs, I have been advised by Mr. Little that he will make every effort to have the Airlite Neon Sign people clean up the property. I have also been advised by Mr. Van Loom of Airlite Neon Sign Ltd. that the property will be cleaned up within two weeks as of September 13th. Mr. Little has, however, advised me that a separate application is being submitted to the Planning Department for the purpose of obtaining a Development Permit for Cliff’s Auto Transmission.”

[City of Edmonton Archives RG11 C19 f90]

Cliff’s Transmission and Auto Parts are listed at 10823-101 Street in the 1964 and 1965 Henderson’s Directories and at 10635-95 Street from 1967 to 1976. No further entries appear in the Henderson’s Directories after this. (This is the date that Cliff’s Towing first shows up in the directories.)

8. Canadian Furniture Company

Canadian Furniture Company first appeared in Henderson’s Directory in 1936 as Canadian Furniture Exchange, located at 10255-10259 – 97 Street. Samuel Dolinko was listed as the first proprietor. Sam Dolinko first appears in the 1933 Henderson’s Directory, described as a peddler. In 1937 the

address changed to 10273 – 97 Street. In 1938 and later years it was once again listed as 10255 – 97 Street.

Samuel Dolinko was sole proprietor of businesses carried on under the firm names of Canadian Furniture Store, Canadian Furniture Company, and Canadian Furniture Exchange; his business was incorporated with the name Canadian Furniture Co. Ltd. in 1954. [Alberta Corporate Registries, Canadian Furniture Co. Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta; Joint Stock Company, Canadian Furniture Co. Ltd., file #17894 - Certified 24 December 1954] [Letter to Registrar of Companies, Edmonton, Alberta, from S. Dolinko, 6 November 1954]

The company declared its purpose “to purchase or otherwise acquire and undertake all of part of the assets, business property, privileges, contracts and rights of the business carried on by Samuel Dolinko under the names Canadian Furniture Store, Canadian Furniture Company, Canadian Furniture Exchange; to manufacture, treat, finish, buy, sell and otherwise dispose of furniture, house furnishings, draperies, mats, carpets, rugs, linoleums and other floor coverings, dishes, glassware, crockery, washing machines, radios, television and electrical appliances, leather goods, stoves, ranges, gas fixtures and appliances, hardware, toys, games and any household fittings, utensils, ornaments or fancy goods, musical instruments of all kinds, and to sell and manufacture any and all goods and materials used therein, or any of them; to deal in rattans and all products thereof; to buy, sell, trade, exchange, deal in or otherwise acquire, salvage stocks, jobs, goods, wares and merchandise of every description [Memorandum of Association of Canadian Furniture Co. Ltd., 22 November 1954]

The two owners were Samuel Dolinko, 10255-97 Street, merchant, with 51 common shares, and Max Dolinko, 10255-97 Street, merchant, with 49 common shares. [The Companies

Act, Notice of Directors, 3 January 1955] Its office was located at 102 Mercantile Building, in Edmonton.

Cila Dolinko, 10255-97 Street, Edmonton, married woman, was added as a director in February 1955; Samuel and Cila Dolinko changed address to 10236-120 Street in 1963; Max Dolinko listed at 13911-77 Avenue in 1964. Shares were now divided as follows: Samuel Dolinko, 51 shares; Max Dolinko, 47 shares; Cila Dolinko, 2 shares. [The Companies Act, Notice of Directors, 28 February 1955; Annual Report, 31 December 1963; Annual Report, 31 December 1964] On 26 June 1969 Moses I. Lieberman, barrister & solicitor was named director of the company. Samuel Dolinko and Cila Dolinko ceased to be directors. The Annual Report (31 December 1969) names Max Dolinko as the principal shareholder (99 shares) with M.I. Lieberman holding 1 share.

Canadian Furniture Company and Venice Holdings amalgamated under the Canadian Furniture name in 1984. [In the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta... In the matter of the proposed amalgamation of Canadian Furniture Co. Ltd. and Venice Holdings Ltd. before the Honorable Justice Donald H. Bowen..., 23 March 1984] Its office moved to 1900 Phipps-McKinnon Building, 10020-101A Ave, in 1985. The Annual Return, 10 March 1987 no longer lists Max Dolinko, instead 294074 Alberta Ltd. holds 98% of voting shares. Peter M. Caffaro holds 2% of voting shares. The director of the corporation in 1989 was Max Dolinko. Business Corporations Act, Notice of Directors, 25 November 1992, reports Steven Dolinko, 111 West 17th Street, New York City, New York, as director. Business Corporations Act, Notice of Directors, 16 August 1993 lists Jamie Dolinko, #3, 223-East 5th Street, New York, New York, and Caryl Dolinko, #205, 1175-West 11th Avenue, Vancouver, as directors. Business Corporations Act,

Articles of Dissolution, dated 8 January 1998, includes the Certificate of Dissolution for the company, dated 12 January 1998.

Lighting up the Night

Effective urban illumination really dates from the use of natural gas in the early 19th century. Another leap forward occurred in 1879 with the carbon-thread incandescent lamp. The next year Thomas Edison invented a 16-watt bulb that would last for over 60 days. The electrical age had begun.

Neon was not discovered until 1898, when William Ramsey and M.W. Travers made the discovery in London. The name coined for the discovery means “new gas.” Soon efforts were being made to distill neon gas from liquefied air, in which it constitutes one part per 65,000.

Georges Claude was the first to apply an electrical discharge to a sealed tube of neon gas in about 1902. Claude is credited with the development of a neon sign. The first public exposure to one of his neon lamps occurred at the Paris Expo on 11 December 1910. The first commercial sign was sold by one of Claude’s associates, Jaques Fonseque, to a Paris barber in 1912. Claude then patented the neon lighting tube on 19 January 1915. Claude introduced neon signs to the United States through his company Claude Neon in 1923, when he sold two large signs to a Packard dealership in Los Angeles.

Red is the colour that neon gas produces, glowing even at atmospheric pressure. The many other colours are produced by argon, mercury or phosphor. The term “neon tubes” is used for all these, however.

Advertising Signs in Edmonton

Advertising signs as well as signs identifying places of business appeared in the Edmonton Settlement from the time that the first businesses began to appear outside Fort Edmonton during the 1870s and 1880s. When the first electrical plant began operation in Ross Flats on 22 December 1891, illuminated signs became a possibility, and gradually began to appear on business premises around the town of Edmonton. As the town centre grew and large brick businesses replaced the first frame buildings, these surfaces became prominent and convenient locations for huge signs advertising everything from Coca-Cola to theatres like the Pantages.

Edmonton fell in love with brightly lit streets well before neon came to the city. After the end of the First World War, with a return to normal life, this ideal became more attractive in many minds. "Let us make Jasper Avenue a blaze of lights," Alderman Hepburn proclaimed during a meeting of the City Council Safety and Health Committee in October 1919, during a debate on the revision of electrical lighting bylaws. He noted that cities on the west coast were allowed more latitude for lighting businesses, greatly improving the appearance of the streets. Jasper Avenue, City Council felt, was a potential Great White Way, and allowed bigger electric signs to be put up.

Neon comes to Edmonton

On 18 December 1928 the first neon sign appeared in Edmonton on Darling's Drug Store, at the corner of Jasper Avenue and Second Street. The Brilliant Tube Sign Co. (Canada) Ltd., with its head office and plant in Victoria, British Columbia, installed this sign. This company and others soon began lobbying to be allowed to have larger signs to display their work.

Hook Signs was an early proponent of neon signs in Edmonton. The company was established in the city in 1908, and

incorporated as Hook Signs Ltd. in February 1913. During the building boom before the First World War, Hook Signs produced a great deal of store identification signage, display advertising, vehicle signage and gold leaf signs. A Claude Neon Sign also was placed in a window display in December 1928 as part of the effort by Hook Signs to introduce Edmontonians to this “Wonder Invention of the Age.”

Larger signs were allowed by 1928, although they were not welcomed with open arms by City Architect John Martland. “Reviewing the matter of signs purely from [an] esthetic point of view I must confess that personally I am not very much in favor of them,” Martland wrote. “[It] would appear that the use of signs and particularly ... the more recent Neon Signs have come to stay and are looked upon with favor by the general public,” he added with a note of resignation. The reluctance of those like John Martland to allow large neon signs was overcome through a concerted campaign by the sign companies, and the growing popularity of the neon sign among the public. Edmonton also did not want to be “left behind” by other more adventurous and innovative cities.

Edmonton companies

By 1929 local companies like Douglas Hammill Limited were manufacturing neon signs in Edmonton. Canadian Neon Light, Ltd., neon sign distributors for Alberta and Saskatchewan, also provided such signs in Edmonton through Electrical Engineers Ltd. Henderson Signs Limited sold neon signs “made by Edmonton men in Edmonton’s oldest established sign shop.” Neon Products of Western Canada, Limited announced plans to open an Edmonton neon products factory early in 1930.

The Watson Neon Sign and Service Co. later summed up the general idea in its advertising in 1939. “Neon signs compel

attention – increase business,” it proclaimed. “Easily pay for themselves by profits from increased business.”

Companies like Blanchett Neon found an eager market for neon signs in the years following the Second World War. George Blanchett established Blanchett Decorators in Edmonton in 1912. His business, which he began shortly after immigrating from England, presented painting and paperhanging services. In 1946 his sons George Jr. and Edward established the local neon business after purchasing a used neon tube bending and pumping apparatus in Calgary. This business formed the basis of Blanchett Decorators, Neon and Sign Division. Blanchett produced some of the classic signs that still illustrate the spirit of Edmonton in the 1950s – the Shasta Café, the Seven Seas Restaurant, and Waterloo Mercury.

Plaque Texts

1. Pantages Theatre

The Pantages Theatre operated as a vaudeville theatre at 10209 Jasper Avenue from 1913 until 1921.

George Brown, who rented the southwest corner of Jasper Avenue and Second Street for one thousand dollars a month in 1912, wished to interest investors in building on the lots so that he could benefit from the deal, although he could not afford to purchase that property at the height of the prewar speculation. Brown interested a fellow Greek immigrant, Alexander Pantages, the famous theatrical impresario and entrepreneur, in building on the rear two thirds of his rented property, and then convinced City Council to loan him \$50 thousand, and began construction on the front third of the property. That June it was announced in Seattle that B. Marcus Pritica, the architect who designed all the Pantages theatres, would design a theatre complex for Alexander Pantages.

Theatres also were planned for Canada in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Vancouver. While the Vancouver building would be ten stories high, the Edmonton theatre would only stand five stories high, a local newspaper noted that “more money will be expended in Edmonton to provide for one of the handsomest theatres and office buildings in Western Canada.” Mayor William Short opened the Pantages Theatre on 12 May 1913 to a packed house of 1600 people. Lieutenant Governor Bulyea, Mayor Short and a plethora of dignitaries were among the opening night audience. The *Edmonton Bulletin* heralded the Pantages as the “most northerly high class vaudeville play house in North America.”

In July 1921 George and Gust Brown, Edmonton partners with Alexander and Louis Pantages in the Pantages Edmonton Theatre Company Limited , heard news from Seattle that the Pantages company had stated that their company was insolvent - and that they were planning to place the Edmonton Pantages in receivership. The Browns, fifty per cent partners, launched legal action to restrain the Pantages brothers from taking this action. The Browns announced that the theatre would reopen on 3 September 1921 as “a motion picture house.” This spelled the end of the traveling vaudevillians, although the new Metropolitan Theatre declared that it would retain “a real concert orchestra” under Edgar Williams.

Around 1931 Alex Entwistle purchased the theatre, upgraded the sound system for the “talkies,” and added what he now called the Strand Theatre to his network of movie houses. Some live events remained, as the Edmonton Little Theatre and local opera productions used the stage on occasion. Premier William Aberhart recorded his Edmonton Prophetic Bible Institute radio broadcasts in the Strand.

In 1953 the Strand was renovated, and three years later purchased by Famous Players. First Northern Building Corporation purchased the Strand in 1959. It was declared a Provincial Historic Resource in 1976, and dismantled in 1979.

This sign was removed from the theatre sometime after the name was changed, after which it formed the inside wall of a 97 Street salvage yard for several years. The vertical sign once had a decorative illuminated “cascade” of lights over it, enhancing its first impression.

PANTAGES PHOTOS

A McDermid Studio photograph taken 24 July 1919 shows the north façade, or main entrance on Jasper Avenue, including the upright, projecting sign in question, rising above the awning-type marquee over the front entry (CEA EA-118-82). Another photograph taken in 1919 during the return of the 49th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, shows the top of the marquee crowded with people huddling around the vertical sign as the 49ers march past below them (CEA EA-327-32). Another McDermid photograph shows how the entire sign assembly was mounted and attached to the Pantages façade on 3 September 1919 (CEA EA-160-295; see also Glenbow NC-6-4669). Two other images from about this time show the Pantages Block with its signs clearly visible. The American Dairy Lunch now shows clearly just east of the Pantages (Glenbow Archives NC-6-4550 and NC-6-4670).

A series of three photographs taken in 1921 show the front entrance of the Pantages Theatre clearly, with details of the marquee surmounted by its decorative “coat of arms” (Glenbow Archives NC-6-6027, NC-6-6029b, and NC-6-7090). These may be the most detailed view of the signs.

Byron-May also took another night photograph of the Pantages Theatre looking west on Jasper Avenue from 102 Street, and showing how the sign appeared when illuminated (CEA EB23-5; note also the illuminated Shasta Grill sign). The theatre itself is seen from the southwest on 10 March 1923, in a McDermid Studio shot taken during an event attracting long lineups stretching around the block. The painted sign on the west wall ("Pantages Vaudeville") can be seen in this photograph, taken from above.

2. The Princess Theatre

Prominent Strathcona businessman J.W. McKernan, who already operated two "photo-play" theatres on the south side, built the Princess Theatre on Whyte Avenue during 1914 and 1915. It was designed by the architectural firm of Wilson and Herrald, and constructed by Brown and Hargraves. "Except for the name set in tiles and the copper cornice the whole front of the three storey building will be of marble," the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported. "It will be the only marble front building west of Winnipeg." The outbreak of the First World War, and the resulting shortages of labour and materials, postponed the opening until March 1915, despite the declaration on the date stone above the entrance that the opening occurred in 1914.

The Princess Theatre closed in 1958, in the face of competition from television. The Princess Theatre was purchased by Towne Cinemas in 1970, and the given a "facelift" before reopening as the Klondike Cinema. The Princess was purchased by the Old Strathcona Foundation, restored, and reopened in 1978.

The large Princess sign was removed in 1964 and donated to the Archives and Landmarks Committee, forerunner of the Edmonton Historical Board. For many years the Princess sign was attached to the back of the old City Archives Building, on its southwest corner.

3. Drug Store Signs

The first neon sign in Edmonton was put up on Darling's Drug Store in 1928. Such businesses have been among the most common sites for neon signs over the years.

This sign appears to have been discovered in the basement of the Stovel Block, constructed on Namayo Avenue (97 Street) in 1910. There is a story that the sign appeared originally on the Armstrong Drug Store, although this remains unconfirmed.

Armstrong Drug Store first opened on Namayo Avenue near Boyle Street (103 Avenue) in 1907. Armstrong Drugs offered its services to the public on this location for the next nine decades. George S. Armstrong, the owner, served as mayor of Edmonton and City Commissioner during 1912-1913. Between 1920 and 1950 M.J. Warner was the proprietor of Armstrong Drugs and Stationery. In 1950 George J. Andrews took over.

DRUGS PHOTOS

A photograph of Namayo Avenue looking north from Boyle Street (103 Avenue) in September 1907 shows Armstrong Drugs with a large painted sign on its south wall. The sign appears to read: G.S. Armstrong Drugs and Stationery. [Ernest Brown photograph, Provincial Archives of Alberta – also see CEA EA-157-410 for a copy of this image.] Armstrong Drugs still had no projecting sign of any kind in 1913 when another photograph was taken. Mac's Bath and Massage did have a projecting sign on the building at the time, however.

Armstrong Drugs contented itself with window advertising ("Kodaks Trusses"). [Provincial Archives of Alberta, B 4129]

Another well-known projecting drugstore sign was seen on the Merrick Drug Stores for many years, and is now reproduced on the replica of one Merricks location in Fort Edmonton Park. [See Glenbow Archives ND-3-5848c for a view of this sign in

1931. It reads: "Drugs Sodas-Lunches." This identical sign is shown on two Merrick Drug Stores in Edmonton in 1931. (Also see Glenbow ND-3-5848a).

The sign, a narrow vertical sign spelling out DRUGS from top to bottom, outlined in blue-green, as is the entire sign, has a solid red background for the letters. Holes remain where the neon tubes, now missing, were threaded into the display. A decal indicates that A-1 Neon Signs, of Edmonton, manufactured the sign.

4. W.W. Arcade

The W.W. Arcade building was first known as the Goodridge Block, constructed for Leonard A. Goodridge at 9696 Jasper Avenue during 1911 and 1912, and designed by architect Robert Percy Barnes. The ground floor at first housed a men's wear store, barbershop, wine, liquor and cigar store, and pool hall, while the upper floors housed offices. The Goodridge Block stood at a prominent location at the northeast corner of Jasper Avenue and Namayo Avenue, during its last years as the principal commercial intersection of the city.

In 1932 the main floor of the building was taken over by W.W. Sales Hardware, when Samuel P. Wilson purchased the property. During the Second World War its name was changed to W.W. Arcade by the new owners, the Ainsley brothers (Alex, Bob and Dave), and this name lasted from 1942 until March 1991, when the business moved out of the main floor of the building. The Ainsleys carried out major renovations in 1967, rebuilding the east wall, modifying the storefront, and refinishing the roof.

In November 1991 the Edmonton Downtown Business Corporation received funding from the federal government to

restore the Goodridge Block. The grand opening took place on 15 April 1993.

5. Mike's News

Mike's News carried on business as an Edmonton institution from 1912 until 1986. Its distinctive sign, with the engrossed reader, his hat showing above his copy of the *Toronto Star Weekly*, and one crossed foot wagging away, was a landmark on Jasper Avenue from 1934 until it was removed in 1979. The "newsstand" remained at 10062 Jasper Avenue for most of its life, until it was moved to 10119-101 Street in 1979, at which time the sign was donated to Fort Edmonton Park.

John "Mike" Michaels also was something of an Edmonton institution. He arrived in Edmonton from New York City in 1912, and began selling newspapers using a horse as transportation, and later a four-wheeled vehicle powered by a motorcycle engine. At first he had as associates several friends from New York City.

Michaels began by selling newspapers on the corner of First Street and Jasper Avenue after buying out Mickey Ryan and Walter Wolk, obtaining their busy spot to conduct his downtown newspaper vending business. This situation lasted until just before Christmas 1916 when the *Edmonton Journal* reported a change.

Mike has found for himself a comfy location between Jasper and Howard, where the Boston Hat Works used to hold forth, and for the cold months, or perhaps indefinitely, Mike and his clerks will be inside looking out instead of spending all their waking moments on the street corner.... Winter is coming on and Mike's clerks have become more or less aristocratic. If they have to be tradespeople they want to be inside like other merchants.... Mike will retain the corner of 101st and Jasper but not as such a well

stocked news stand in future. In his new store he carries a full line of magazine, newspapers, periodicals and smokes, and will specialize in magazine subscriptions, having opened up this week especially to be certain of the Christmas crowds.

The new premises “a few doors East of the Old Stand at the corner of First and Jasper,” advertised that it was “equipped better than ever to serve the public”, and it would remain there until 1979

John Michaels started the Newsboys Band in 1914, with the help of Bishop H.A. Gray, who wanted to find something constructive for the boys to do in the evenings. The band eventually became an Edmonton institution, and was internationally recognized in its heyday. In 1930 Michaels started his annual Christmas dinners for homeless veterans at what later became known as the Montgomery Legion. Mike's was also a post office, where many Edmontonians received their copies of British and other overseas publications, and a busy ticket office after 1918. In 1978 the Michaels family sold Mike's, after which it was moved to the lower floor of the former Johnstone-Walker store on 101 Street north of 101A Avenue, where it operated until 1986.

MIKE'S PHOTOS

A good series of photographs, taken on 5 December 1966 during the fiftieth anniversary of Mike's, and printed in the *Edmonton Journal*, show the sign in place, and indicate how it was attached to the façade. (Provincial Archives of Alberta J 52/1 and J 52/2) The sign as it appeared on 18 August 1978 is seen in another *Edmonton Journal* image. (Provincial Archives of Alberta J 4205/1)

6. Georgia Baths

Steam baths once were a common part of Edmonton life, popular in later years with immigrant groups and working men. The story was different in 1913, when the first Turkish bath opened. Turkish baths begin with a steam bath, followed by a soap rub, and end with a salt rub. "A new and elaborate Turkish Bath House has at last been established in the city to fill a long felt want for a city of the size and population of Edmonton," an article in the *Edmonton Journal* observed. "The business itself will be located in the new Gibson block, one of Edmonton's high class structures, situate on Jasper avenue at the point where Rice, Kinistino and Jasper converge...."

Edmonton Turkish Baths Limited opened for business on 25 October 1913. At that time such facilities were considered much as health spas are today. Edmonton Turkish Baths boasted 13 large sleeping rooms, two large hot rooms, a steam room, three shower baths, six tub baths, a barbershop, cigar stand, refreshments and shoeshine. "Competent masseurs" (Messrs. Mason and McAlduff) were available, and clients were invited to "enjoy the luxury of a real Turkish Bath, and a sleep in our cosy sleeping rooms." Appointments were available "by day or night." In short, this was "the most up-to-date in Western Canada."

The Georgia Turkish Baths, a direct successor of the Edmonton Turkish Baths, would be the last such business to close in Edmonton. Mike Bordian built the last location for his steam bath in the dirt basement of the Brighton Block when his lease expired in the nearby Flatiron Building in 1946. His son Ed took over in 1961, and managed the baths until the business was closed on 23 August 1991. It reopened later as Steamers, but was again closed in November 2005.

When it closed Georgia Baths was known as "Edmonton's oldest public steam bath."

GEORGIA BATHS PHOTOS

An excellent colour photograph of the Georgia Baths sign *in situ* was taken by Bruce Edwards, and appeared in an article in the *Edmonton Journal* 18 February 1991. The sign, featuring a woman wearing a bikini on a beach, with the name “Georgia Baths” illuminated in neon, hung over the entrance to this location at 9668 Jasper Avenue for many years. Another photograph of the sign *in situ* was one, also taken by Bruce Edwards, that appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* on 18 January 1991. It clearly shows the sign and how it was attached to the façade of the Brighton Block. An earlier view of the sign can be seen in City of Edmonton Archives photograph EA-193-53. An early photograph of the Flatiron Building features a large sign that reads: “The Edmonton Turkish Baths Co. Ltd. In The Basement Open All Night. (Provincial Archives of Alberta B4808).

7. Cliff's Auto Parts and Wreckers

Auto wreckers and parts dealers have been Edmonton fixtures since the first car first appeared on its streets. The need for such businesses increased greatly with the return of prosperity following the Second World War, the advent of the oil boom in 1947, and the demand among suburban dwellers for more cars. ADD stats

Cliff's Auto Parts and Wreckers operated at 9646 Jasper Avenue from 1959 until 1962. William Choma was the proprietor, while Phillip Fath was the manager from 1959 to 1962. In 1962 Cliff's Transmission and Auto Parts moved to 10819B-101 Street. Cliff's Auto Parts also had a yard located in Riverdale by about 1963. Cliff's Transmission and Auto Parts were located at 10823-101 Street in 1964 and 1965 and at 10635-95 Street from 1967 to 1976.

8. Canadian Furniture Company

Canadian Furniture Company

Furniture stores and “exchanges” were common in Edmonton beginning with the first immigration boom in the early 20th century. Many newcomers were on the move constantly as they settled into their latest home, while a large upwardly mobile segment of the population also felt the need to change their furnishings as they could afford them. This created commercial opportunities that were specific to that time, but were also renewed with every wave of immigration during periods of increased economic activity in the city. Sam Dolinko’s Edmonton Furniture Exchange was one such business.

Samuel Dolinko was the proprietor of the business carried on under the names Canadian Furniture Store, Canadian Furniture Company, and Canadian Furniture Exchange. Sam Dolinko began working in Edmonton in 1933, during the height of the Great Depression. He opened Canadian Furniture Company store on 97 Street near 103 Avenue in 1936. Sam and his wife Cila, and his son Max Dolinko, who managed the business and saw it expand after the 1970s, were the principal operators of the thriving business for decades. As one of Sam’s grandsons noted, “My grandparents created the store, my Father gave it life.” The company closed in January 1998, but only after serving Edmonton for close to five decades during its postwar growth and expansion. The sign is a reminder of the vibrant commercial activity that grew in the city during those decades.

Appendix I

ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. Princess Theatre

- a. 1914-1958 and 1978 - present [sign from 1914-1964]
- b. 10335 Whyte Avenue
- c. I was able to find photos of the sign, but not with the sign mounted on the building. I placed a call to the theatre [780-430-9100] but could not get hold of anyone or leave a message.

2. Pantages Theatre

- a. 1913-1930 [became the Strand in 1931] b. 10209 Jasper Avenue
- c. I found a number of decent images, plus an image of the sign on the old City Archives.

3. Mike's News

- a. 1912-1986 [sign from 1934-1979]
- b. 10062 Jasper Ave, moved to 10119-101 Street
- c. Good images

4. Georgia Bath's

- a. 1946-1991
- b. 9668 Jasper Avenue [Brighton Block/ Flatiron Building]
- c. Good images

5. W.W. Arcade

- a. 1942-1991 [began in 1930 as W.W. Sales Hardware]
- b. 9696 Jasper Ave [Goodridge Block]
- c. Good images

6. Armstrong Drugs

- a. 1907-[sometime between 1987 and 1999]

b. 10331-97 Street [433-439 Namayo Ave]

c. NB This is not the Stovel Block, which is across the avenue [427 Namayo Ave]

d. No images of signage.

e. This first appears in Henderson's in 1907:

1905/06-n/a

1907 - Armstrong, Geo, druggist, 439 Namayo

(Same yearly listing until...)

1910 - Armstrong, Geo, druggist, 435 Namayo

1911 - Armstrong, Geo, Mayor and City Commissioner, also druggist, 437 Namayo

1912 - [ditto, except 433 Namayo]

1913 - Armstrong, Geo, druggist, 433 Namayo

1914 - Armstrong, Geo S. druggist, 10345-97 St/Namayo Ave (I didn't check to see when Armstrong Drugs and Stationery first appeared, sometime between 1914 and 1920) 1920 - Armstrong Drugs and Stationery, M.J. Warner prop, 10345 - 97 Street. (Random years selected hereafter.) In 1950 Walter Maday and George Andrews were proprietors and the store was listed at 10363-97 Street. In 1960 Mrs. Stephanie and Geo J. Andrews were proprietors and the store was listed at 10331-97 Street. In 1987 (last year of Henderson's publication) George J. and Mrs. Stephanie Andrews were managers. In 1999 (crisscross directory) the drugstore no longer existed. A paint shop was located at 10331-97 Street.

7. Canadian Furniture

a. 1936-[sometime between 1987 and 1999] b. 1025S-59-97St c. No images

d. First appears in Henderson's in 1937 (the original proprietor, Samuel Dolinko is first mentioned as a peddler in 1933).

1937 - Canadian Furniture Exchange, Samuel Dolinko prop, 10273-97 Street.

1938 - [ditto except 10255-97 St] (Same yearly listing until well into the 1950s. I randomly checked Henderson's until...) 1987 (last year of Henderson's) Canadian Furniture Exchange, Max Dolinko mgr. ret, 10255 - 97 Street.

8. Cliffs Auto Parts a. 1959-1962 b. 9646 Jasper Ave c. No images d. Henderson's lists the following:

1958 - 9646 Jasper Ave, vacant

1959 - Cliffs Auto Parts and Wreckers, Phillip Fath mgr. 9646 Jasper Ave

1961 - [ditto except William Choma, prop.]

1962 - Cliffs Auto Parts, William Choma, mgr, 10823-101 St (I checked Henderson's in 1965. Cliff's Auto Parts didn't exist and 9646 Jasper Ave was Condon Barr.)

